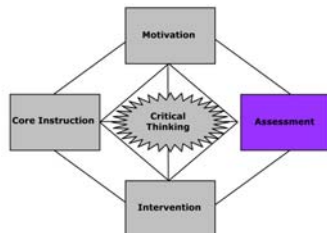


## School Effectiveness K-12 Literacy

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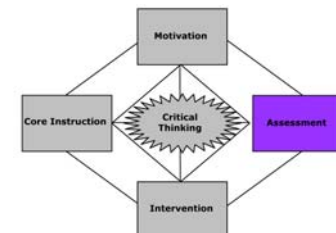
### The Arizona Department of Education Comprehensive Literacy Framework



## Assessment

The ongoing use of assessment is essential for maximizing student progress and for providing students with a successful learning experience.

~ - Douglas W. Carnine, et al. ~



“Struggling readers need to be placed in research-validated or research-based programs with proven effectiveness in accelerating student gains” (Archer, 2007). Moreover, in light of recent studies indicating that many students who graduate cannot read well enough to meet the challenges of college and/or workplace texts, educators at every level and in every discipline need to know and address their students’ reading strengths and weakness.

Determining a student’s particular needs is not a simple matter. In Arizona, AIMS scores are helpful in establishing that a reading deficit exists, but they are not helpful in identifying the specific interventions required in order to remedy that deficit. Just because two students’ scores are in the category “Falls Far Below” does not mean that they have the same instructional needs. Thus, standardized diagnostic assessments identifying levels of deficiency in phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—in combination with ongoing instructional assessments—are critical. Taken together, these assessments provide the data that drives effective intervention.

The state of Arizona takes literacy seriously. Our statewide reading initiative is ARS Section 15-704: AZ READS. While there are 5 critical components to AZ READS, the E in READS stands for Early Diagnosis and Intervention, calling for the prevention of early reading difficulties through early screening, ongoing diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring to inform instruction and intervention.

In order to further define subsections A and D of ARS Section 15-704 legislation, a Task Force was created with education representatives from around the state. The Task Force determined that schools providing instruction to K-3 students must select and administer classroom-based screening, ongoing diagnostic, and progress monitoring assessments. The AZ Reads Task Force established criteria for evaluating assessments. The Task Force called for assessments that are reliable and valid, efficient, and part of an assessment system. Of the assessments submitted to the Task Force for review, three met the established criteria. The three assessments approved for use in Arizona are DIBELS, AIMSWeb, and Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI).

In addition to establishing criteria for selecting K-3 reading assessments, the task force was charged with defining assessment terms. An effective, comprehensive, reading program includes reading assessments to accomplish four purposes:

- Outcome: Assessments that provide a bottom-line evaluation of the effectiveness of the reading program.
- Screening: Assessments that are administered to determine which children are at risk for reading difficulty and which will need additional intervention.
- Diagnostic: Assessments that help teachers plan instruction by providing in-depth information about students' skills and instructional needs.
- Progress Monitoring: Assessments that determine if students are making adequate progress or need more intervention to achieve grade level reading outcomes.
  - Best practice calls for students reading at the Intensive level to be progress monitored once a week. These students are also labeled deficit and at-risk.

- Best practice calls for Strategic level readers, also known as emerging or some-risk, to be progress monitored every other week.
- Best practice calls for Benchmark level readers, also known as established or low-risk, to be progress monitored at least once between benchmarking periods.

The role of assessment in schools is taking a dramatic and exciting turn. Each of the four types of assessment must be standardized, reliable, and valid; it must target early literacy skills; and it must be used to evaluate and inform instruction. As much as possible assessments should be administered in an efficient and effective manner, focus on mastery, and be sensitive to change. The following are integral components of any healthy assessment system.

1. Assessments used in the classroom for all students need to be standardized, meaning they should be administered in the same way every time (using the same directions, scoring procedures, etc.), so comparisons can be made across students, teachers, grade levels, schools, and districts.
2. Assessments used for all students must be reliable and valid. Reliability refers to consistency. The score should remain the same if the assessment is given on a different day, by a different person using similar items. Reliability enables teachers to be confident in the accuracy of their scores. A valid assessment measures what it says it will measure and provides meaningful information.
3. Assessments should target essential literacy skills. Generally, it is not necessary to measure all skills, just those that are the most critical.
4. Assessments should be used to evaluate and inform instruction. They should answer critical questions, such as "Did the student learn what I taught?" "What do I teach next?" "Can I move on?" "Do I need to re-teach?" And so on.
5. Assessments should be easy to administer and provide useful information.
6. Assessments need to be repeatable and sensitive to small amounts of change over time so the results can be used to inform and evaluate instruction.

The Arizona Department of Education recognizes that assessments are integral to the art and science of teaching and learning; that they serve to drive instruction; and that they help to identify students' specific reading needs. In support of Arizona educators at all levels, the Assessment component of the K-12 Literacy Framework provides:

- professional resources
- researched/research-based assessment tools
- professional articles
- professional development opportunities
- links to relevant ADE resources